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FM THE SITUATION ROOM TOHAK 157

TO WINSTON LORD FOR DR. KISSINGER

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TOHAK 157

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INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

XXX TO BE DONE.

(TEXT) IN 1970, AS I RECALL, I DISCUSSED AND ANALYZED THE SITUATION THAT WOULD ARISE IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM IN 1972 AND 1973, AND I ANTICIPATED THAT IN 1972 U.S. TROOPS MIGHT BE TOTALLY WITHDRAWN AND THAT THE RVN ARMED FORCES WOULD ASSUME FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR GROUND COMBAT OPERATIONS. I ALSO ANTICIPATED THAT BECAUSE 1972 IS A U.S. ELECTION YEAR AND 1973 WILL BE A POSTELECTION YEAR IT WAS HIGHLY LIKELY THAT THE COMMUNISTS WOULD FIGHT A FINAL BATTLE. THEREFORE I REQUESTED THAT U.S. STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL AIR SUPPORT BE MAINTAINED UNTIL LATE 1973. IN THIS SPIRIT, I ALSO REQUESTED THAT ROK TROOPS REMAIN UNTIL LATE 1973. WHAT I FORESAW HAS NOW COME TRUE.

IN A BROADER PERSPECTIVE, OUR REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM CAN BE PROUD OF THE FACT THAT IT IS PLAYING THE ROL
OF AN OUT

MAY I PARENTHETICALLY SAY TO YOU THAT MANY THEORISTS VISUALIZE

A SOLUTION WHEREBY INDOCHINA WOULD BECOME A BUFFER ZONE. THEY CONTEND THAT OF THE TWO COMMUNIST COUNTRIES--THE USSR AND RED CHINA--THE USSR IS NOT TO BE FEARED BECAUSE IT IS A EUROPEAN COMMUNIST COUNTRY FAR FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA, WHEREAS RED CHINA IS TO BE FEARED BECAUSE IT IS AN ASIAN COMMUNIST COUNTRY CLOSE TO US. THESE THEORIES CALL FOR TURNING INDOCHINA INTO A BUFFER ZONE, WHERE THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE--WHO HAVE TRADITIONALLY HATED CHINA--WOULD BE CAPABLE OF OPPOSING RED CHINA. ACCORDING TO THESE THEORISTS, TO INSURE THAT THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE SUCCESSFULLY PERFORM THIS TASK, SOUTH AND NORTH VIETNAM MUST BE REUNIFIED SO AS TO HAVE SUFFICIENT MANPOWER AND TROOP STRENGTH. THESE THEORISTS VISUALIZE THAT ONLY HANOI IS CAPABLE OF LEADING INDOCHINA IN PERFORMING THIS TASK--THAT OF TURNING INDOCHINA INTO A BUFFER ZONE, UNDER SOVIET INFLUENCE, TO CONTAIN RED CHINA.

REGARDING THIS THEORY, I HOLD THAT THE USSR AND RED CHINA POSE A COMMON DANGER, THAT EVEN A REUNIFIED VIETNAM WOULD NOT BE A YUGOSLAVIA, THAT THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (AS HEARD) WOULD BY NO MEANS BE ABLE TO PLAY THE ROLE OF A YUGOSLAVIA VIS A VIS THE USSR AND RED CHINA, THAT VIETNAM (AS HEARD) WOULD BY NO MEANS BE ABLE TO PLAY THE ROLE OF A YUGOSLAVIA VIS A VIS THE USSR, AND THAT A SO-CALLED YUGOSLAVIA OF INDOCHINA WOULD CONSIST SOLELY OF COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBERS AFFILIATED WITH RED CHINA. THEREFORE, THIS THEORY IS UNTENABLE.

WHY NOT TURN NORTH VIETNAM, AND NORTH VIETNAM ALONE, INTO A BUFFER ZONE AND MAINTAIN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM AS A FREE NATION? NORTH VIETNAM ALONE, AS A BUFFER ZONE, WOULD BE ABLE TO KEEP RED CHINA PERHAPS MORE EFFECTIVELY FROM SPREADING TO SOUTHEAST ASIA. WE REALIZE THEN THAT THIS THEORY WAS PROMOTED BY NORTH VIETNAM. THE NORTH VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS CLAIM THAT VIETNAM IS ONE, AND THAT INDOCHINA CONSISTS OF ONLY THREE NATIONS.

OF NORTH VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST TROOPS FROM SOUTH VIETNAM, CAMBODIA AND LAOS. WE CAN ASSUME THEN THAT THE PRESENT PEACE SOLUTION ADVANCED BY THE COMMUNISTS, WHICH WOULD LEAVE 300,000 NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN THE SOUTH, AND A FORMULA FOR A THREE-SEGMENT GOVERNMENT, A DISGUISED COALITION GOVERNMENT, REPRESENT MERELY A TRANSITIONAL STAGE CONDUCIVE TO REUNIFICATION OF THE SOUTH AND THE NORTH UNDER THE HANOI COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT AND TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS THEORY.

WHAT ROLE IS OUR REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM PLAYING? THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, AS I HAVE SAID, ON ONE HAND IS PROTECTING ITS INDEPENDENCE, TERRITORY AND FREEDOM AND ON THE OTHER HAND IS PLAYING THE ROLE OF AN OUTPOST CONTAINING THE RED TIDE AND KEEPING IT FROM SPREADING ALL OVER SOUTHEAST ASIA. IF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, WHICH I HAVE OFTEN LIKENED TO A STANDARD BEARER, FALLS, I CAN FIND NO OTHER SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRY CAPABLE OF STANDING FIRM. POLITICIANS AROUND US ALSO REALIZE THAT SHOULD THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM FAIL TO STAND FIRM THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN REGION WOULD GRADUALLY FALL INTO COMMUNIST HANDS.

THEREFORE, WHEN WE FOUND OURSELVES IN A SITUATION WHERE WE HAD TO CONTINUE FIGHTING WITH THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE'S OWN BLOOD AND BONES, WE AT ONCE CONFIRMED OUR ASPIRATIONS TO THE U.S. ALLY. I WAS THE FIRST TO WELCOME THE NIXON DOCTRINE AND THE VIETNAMIZATION PROGRAM BECAUSE I BELIEVED THAT THIS WAR IS THE LONGEST FOR THE UNITED STATES, AND THAT THEREFORE THE QUESTION OF TOTAL U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWAL WOULD SOONER OR LATER ARISE. I BELIEVED A PHASED U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWAL--WHILE THE RVN ARMED FORCES GRADUALLY MATURE AND ARE GRADUALLY MODERNIZED TO REPLACE U.S. TROOPS AND THEREBY AVOID A VACUUM--WOULD BE EVEN MORE ADVANTAGEOUS AND LESS DETRIMENTAL TO THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM THAN THE INSISTENCE THAT ONE-HALF MILLION U.S. TROOPS REMAIN IN THE SOUTH UNTIL, FOR POLITICAL OR HUMANITARIAN REASONS, WE WOULD HAVE TO AGREE TO LET ALL THESE 500,000 U.S. TROOPS LEAVE SUMMARILY AND WITHIN A VERY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME. HAD WE DONE SO, THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM WOULD CERTAINLY NOT HAVE SURVIVED.

(MORE)

12 DEC 1962 VJ/GFE/RG